



NIBIN AN EFFECTIVE WEAPON FOR NEW ORLEANS POLICE DEPARTMENT AGAINST GANG CRIME

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New Orleans is one of several locations where the police department has entered into a partnership with ATF in combating violent crime. In 1996, the New Orleans Police Department (NOPD) obtained Integrated Ballistic Identification System (IBIS) technology from the ATF National Integrated Ballistics Information Network (NIBIN) Program. This type of technology would hopefully assist the police in a city with one of the nation's highest homicide rates.

Within the first month of operation, the NOPD Crime Laboratory scored their first "hit" in a case involving the drive-by shooting of a child. A 12-year old child had been shot and killed on the front steps of his home. Detectives were able to identify a suspect and to recover two handguns and a shotgun from the subject's residence. IBIS aided in the positive identification of one of the firearms recovered as the weapon used in the shooting of the child.

A second firearm was also entered into the IBIS database and was positively linked to evidence recovered in an unrelated drive-by shooting. In this incident, multiple victims had been wounded by gunfire. The NOPD and ATF were able to employ IBIS technology to identify, apprehend, and support the successful prosecution of the shooter, who subsequently received a life sentence. These episodes marked the beginning of a pattern of success in New Orleans.

The most recent NIBIN achievement in New Orleans stems from a long-term NOPD investigation initiated by the Fifth District homicide unit. Detectives began by probing a string of violent and brutal murders in the city. Cartridge casings and bullets collected as evidence from crime scenes, and from the

victims, provided invaluable data for the automated evaluation system. The IBIS system soon began to produce links between evidence collected from multiple crime scenes. This data was used by the homicide unit to plot the crime scenes and identify the Seventh Ward of New Orleans as the area most victimized.

ATF became involved in the investigation when the Bureau's firearms trafficking group in New Orleans began following up on the charted hits. Special agents began looking for a relationship between the shootings. Numerous interviews that included family members, friends, and witnesses were conducted.

Police incident reports were reviewed. After evaluation of the evidence, NOPD and ATF investigators combined their resources in pursuit of a violent street gang suspected in the shootings. The gang was known as the "Seventh Ward Soldiers" or "Hardheads."

The NOPD/ATF NIBIN partnership, aided by IBIS technology, connected several different firearms used by the gang in committing a number of drug-related murders and assaults. The NIBIN hits contributed to the identification of witnesses. The resulting information enabled investigators to establish a definitive connection between these crimes.

This partnership, supported by advanced ballistic imaging technology, and aided by the coordination of Federal and State resources, resulted in the Federal indictment of 13 members of the "Seventh Ward Soldiers." **Eleven of the 13 indictees were then convicted in U.S. District Court. Seven of them received life sentences; the sentences of the other four ranged from 14 months to 20 years in length. Only a single defendant was acquitted; one case is still pending.**